

Title: Teaching Ukrainian Cases in the North American College Classroom
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Abstract:

Similarly to most other Slavic languages, Ukrainian has a complex case system that presents a significant challenge both to the learners of this language and to their instructors. Whereas a number of studies have examined the L2 acquisition of the Russian case system by learners with English L1 (e.g., Rubinstein, 1995a, 1995b; Comer & deBenedette, 2010, 2011), no such studies for Ukrainian have appeared to date. This paper will report the results of a study of common case errors made in speech by learners of Ukrainian with English L1. Based on semi-structured interviews with mostly North American college students who are learning Ukrainian, a database of the common case errors was compiled and a number of important patterns were identified. The study compares the error patterns between two groups—students with no proficiency or background in a Slavic language and those with at least intermediate proficiency in another Slavic language or languages (most often Russian). The paper will explain the identified patterns and the possible reasons behind them (specific developmental errors, transfer errors, etc.) Next, it will suggest and describe two approaches to the teaching of Ukrainian cases in the North American college classroom that may help students overcome some of the common patterns of error: structured input activities (Lee & VanPatten, 2003) and form-form activities (Aski, 2005). While the former approach helps students work on correctly distinguishing between the case markings of different, but frequently confused cases in communicative contexts (e.g., Locative vs. Accusative in locational vs. directional phrases), the latter approach aids in correctly acquiring the often confused case markings within a case (e.g., –a vs. –y in singular masculine nouns in the Genitive).

References

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